

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 638

RC 016 425

AUTHOR Reece, Jerald L.; And Others
TITLE Perceptions of Rural School Personnel in North Central Association Member and Non-Member Schools Located in Nine States Regarding Accreditation by the Commission of Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.
PUB DATE 20 Oct 87
NOTE 32p.; Submitted to Committee on Research, Commission on Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. Appendix A contains very small print.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Accreditation (Institutions); Accrediting Agencies; *Administrator Attitudes; Agency Role; *Boards of Education; Comparative Analysis; Elementary Secondary Education; Job Satisfaction; Rural Education; *Rural Schools; Standards; *Teacher Attitudes; Teacher Education; Teaching Load
IDENTIFIERS *Impact; *North Central Association of Colleges and Schools; Teacher Course Assignment

ABSTRACT

This study examines the perceptions of 113 school board members, 119 principals, and 2,028 teachers from 9 states (Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming) regarding the preparation of teachers and the availability of professional services as well as education resources. The study also considers perceptions of these groups about the effect of accreditation by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools on various components of the school. A demographic survey is included to present a more complete picture of the rural population surveyed. Results suggest professional growth and licensure standards are not a problem since many personnel pursue graduate work; personnel from both accredited and non-accredited schools view accreditation as a process for enhancing program quality; both teachers and principals do not support special new rural teacher preparation programs; and both elementary and secondary teachers frequently teach two or more grade levels or disciplines. The study recommends the recent Outcomes Accreditation process as most appropriate for rural schools, review of minimum standards for teacher subject-matter preparation to accommodate diverse rural secondary assignments, wider dissemination of information about exemplary programs in rural schools, and increased efforts to encourage rural school accreditation. (NEC)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED287638



Perceptions of Rural School Personnel in North Central Association
Member and Non-Member Schools Located in Nine States
Regarding Accreditation by the Commission of Schools
North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

*Judy M.
Dacus*

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Prepared by

Jerald L. Reece

Jeanette V. Martin

Judy M. Dacus

New Mexico State University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

* Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

Submitted to:

Committee on Research

Commission on Schools

North Central Association of Colleges and Schools

October 20, 1987

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

016425

INTRODUCTION

Recent research, as well as literature from the past, presents conflicting and confusing information about rural education. In much of the literature on rural education, the strengths and weaknesses of rural schools are discussed and summarized (O'Neal & Becker, 1981-82). Generally, the writers are in agreement on the broad issues and concur that the strengths of rural schools are based on the size which allows teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community to be cooperatively involved in the educational process. Weaknesses almost always include the failure of rural schools to provide continuous, high quality education (Nobel, 1981; Salmon, 1980).

One account of the strengths and weaknesses of rural schools can be found in an article published in the North Central Association Quarterly in 1974. Sturges (1974) suggests that "small schools hold the same concern for quality education as their big city brothers..." (p. 291). While that may be the case, rural schools continue to be plagued by a number of problems over which they have very little control: preservice preparation of teachers; lack of professional services and educational resources; low tax bases; and low socio-economic white and minority groups (Amodeo, 1981).

Charles (1969), in a study of rural teachers, reported that 97.4% of the teachers felt they were inadequately prepared to teach in rural schools. Some of the concerns centered on their lack of preparation in a greater number of subject fields. Maintaining a quality staff of teachers is a principal problem of rural school administrators according to Moriarty (1981). While there may be a number of applicants, finding teachers who can effectively deal with geographic isolation, population diversity and sparsity, and the rural

life style, is difficult. Moriarty (1981) suggests that teachers who lived in rural communities when growing up, or who did their student teaching in a rural setting, usually have less difficulty in adjusting to rural teaching conditions.

The lack of professional services and educational resources further compounds the problem of quality of rural teachers (Becklund & Gaashold, 1980). Inservice and staff development opportunities are limited by geographic isolation and the unavailability of adequate delivery systems. The absence of support services, educational as well as health, social, career, and personal counseling, creates additional problems in rural communities with economically deprived groups.

Charles (1969), Moriarty (1981), Muse and Stonehocker (1979) are researchers who report the perceptions of rural teachers and administrators in their studies. These are important studies since it is essential in research on rural schools to include information from those who are actually involved so that rural values, concerns, frustrations, aspirations, and goals are reflected.

This study looks at the perceptions of school board members, principals, and teachers regarding the preparation of their teachers and the availability of professional services as well as educational resources. The study also considers perceptions of these groups about the effect of accreditation by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools on various components of the school. A demographic survey of the sample populations are included in order to present a more complete picture of the rural population surveyed.

The North Central Association's Commission on Schools accredits nearly all urban and suburban public schools in the nineteen state region served by

the NCA. Although many rural schools exist in the area served by NCA, membership in the NCA is held by only a small number of those schools. In 1981, the Commission on Schools accredited 471 rural high schools, 23 rural junior high/middle schools, and 69 rural elementary schools. Since the researchers were interested in identifying information appropriate to personnel, programs, and perceptions of personnel regarding the value of accreditation to rural schools, a proposal for funding was submitted to the North Central Association's Commission on Schools in 1982. The proposed study was jointly funded by the Commission and New Mexico State University's Department of Curriculum and Instruction and Educational Research Center. The grant focused on a comparative analysis of programs and perceptions of various constituencies in accredited rural schools as opposed to those in non-member rural schools to determine values accrued from North Central Association accreditation.

PROCEDURES

Rural schools were selected for this study from the nine western-most states (Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Wyoming) of the accrediting region of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. These states were chosen for the study because of their high percentage of rural schools and what are perceived to be common problems associated with their rural schools populations. Accredited schools were selected from those identified as rural schools in their annual reports. A representative of each State Department of Education

of the nine states was called to obtain similar matching schools in the state which had never requested North Central Association accreditation.

Pilot Study

In order to validate the questionnaire used in this study, a pilot study was conducted with rural schools in Arkansas. This appeared to be an appropriate area for a pilot study since it had seven member rural elementary schools and 26 member rural high schools. Since no rural junior high/middle schools held membership, two schools were selected from the six which were located in towns under 5,000 population. Of the member schools, two rural elementary and two rural high schools were selected. These schools were matched with non-member schools. A total of 11 schools agreed to participate. Questionnaires were sent for all teachers, the principal, and school board members with instructions that the principal should return teacher and principal questionnaires, with board members returning theirs separately in the self-addressed stamped envelope provided. This same procedure was followed with the nine-state study. Returns from Arkansas schools were sufficient to aid in the revision of the questionnaires for the nine-state study.

RESULTS

Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Responses were received from 2028 teachers, 119 principals, and 113 school board members. The number of responses and percentage of total responses received from teachers and principals by state is shown in Table 1.

Five teacher responses were not identified by state. Percentage is based on total identified responses.

Table 1.
Responses by State

State	Number of teachers	% of total	Number of principals	% of total
Arizona	383	18.9	16	13.4
Colorado	393	19.4	21	17.6
Kansas	145	7.2	7	5.9
Nebraska	192	9.5	16	13.4
New Mexico	494	24.4	40	33.6
North Dakota	74	3.7	2	1.7
Oklahoma	206	10.2	10	8.4
South Dakota	94	4.6	4	3.4
Wyoming	42	2.1	3	2.5

Personal characteristics reported by teachers, principals, and school board members are shown in Table 2. The percent of total respondents is indicated. Not all respondents answered specific questions. As indicated in Table 2, men comprise 42.9% of the teachers while 85.7% of the principals and 77.9% of the school board members are male. The question concerning language proficiency asked respondents to check all languages in which they were fluent. Respondents who checked more than one language proficiency were listed as fluent in two or three languages and these were not counted in individual language responses. When two or more languages were checked, one language was almost always English. Thus approximately 94% of teachers and 93% of school board members are fluent in English while only about 82% of principals reported being fluent in English. The latter is questionable in the view of the researchers. It is their perception that a number of principals failed to check the correct response here, since they believe

principals in these schools were surely proficient in English. Principals did respond to the questionnaire which was written in English. Thirty percent of the rural school board members reported being fluent in two or more languages, while less than 17% of the teachers and 7% of the principals reported being fluent in two or more languages.

Table 2.
Personal Characteristics of Respondents

Item	Teachers	Principals	School Board Members
Total Respondents	2028	119	113
Women	55.7%	10.9%	22.1%
Men	42.9%	85.7%	77.9%
Ethnic Origin:			
American Indian	7.0%	5.0%	7.1%
Asian	1.1%	1.7%	1.8%
Black	1.1%	4.2%	7.1%
Eastern European	3.6%	10.9%	13.3%
Hispanic	8.0%	8.4%	0
Western European	43.4%	38.7%	45.1%
Other	24.4%	31.1%	25.7%
Language Proficiency:			
American Indian	0.4%	0	1.8%
Asiatic languages	0.6%	0	0.9%
English	78.0%	75.6%	62.8%
French	0.1%	0	0
German	0.2%	0	1.8%
Spanish	0.3%	0.8%	0.9%
Other	1.1%	16.8%	0.9%
Fluent in two languages	14.3%	1.7%	19.5%
Fluent in three languages	2.0%	5.0	10.6%

This background information may or may not have some effect on perceptions these respondents have regarding inservice needs. In reviewing this information, it would appear that: (1) few women are serving as

principals in rural schools; (2) only one out of five school board members are women; (3) principals are less likely to be fluent in two languages than are teachers and school board members; (4) nearly one in five principals may have difficulty communicating in English with teachers and board members who are almost all fluent in English, if the data reported regarding principals' fluency in English is accurate; and (5) school board members, teachers and principals appear to be predominantly Anglo if ethnicity and language fluency are considered as related components. It would appear that principals who design inservice programs are predominantly male, while the majority of teachers for whom inservice programs are designed are female.

Academic Characteristics

Another important factor in both the determination of inservice needs and the perception of inservice needs held by respondents is the level of college education acquired by rural school personnel. Academic achievement by respondents is presented in Table 3. Percentages are based on total respondents although not all respondents answered the question.

The information presented in Table 3 indicates that, of these respondents, 39.2 % of the teachers, 93% of the principals and 18.5% of the school board members have achieved at least the master's degree. It is important to note that 2.6% (52 respondents) of the teachers and one principal have not completed the bachelor's degree. Further information related to educational attainment is included in Table 4 which indicates the percentages of teachers and principals who are pursuing further education.

Table 3.
Academic Level Attained by Respondents

	Teachers	Principals	School Board Members
High School Diploma or less	-	-	26.5%
Some College	2.6%	0.8%	26.5%
Bachelor's Degree	56.1%	5.9%	25.7%
Master's Degree	26.6%	31.1%	9.7%
Master's Plus 30	11.0%	43.4%	-
Ed.S. Degree	1.2%	9.7%	-
Doctoral Degree	0.4%	8.8%	8.8%
No response	2.0%	4.2%	0
Percentage with Master's or Higher	39.2%	93.0%	18.5%

As Table 4 indicates, 36.4% of the teacher respondents and 29.4% of the principal respondents are pursuing academic work beyond the level they've already achieved. It is of particular note that 3% of the teachers and 18.5% of the principals are pursuing the Ed.S. or doctoral degrees. Ten teachers and eleven principals reported that they already hold a doctoral degree.

Table 4.
Pursuit of Higher Educational Goals
by Teachers and Principals

Work in Progress for:	Teachers	Principals
Bachelor's Degree	2.6%	0.8%
Master's Degree	21.5%	3.4%
Master's Plus 30	9.3%	6.7%
Ed.S. Degree	1.3%	12.6%
Doctoral Degree	1.7%	5.9%

The information reported in Tables 3 and 4 may have a direct relationship on perceptions of these respondents in regard to pre-service and inservice education which could assist them in enhancing learning opportunities for

rural children and youth. It may be that colleges and universities are more easily accessible in terms of attaining higher levels of education than was true in the past. The desire to obtain higher degrees, and the attainment of higher degrees, may tend to "blunt" the perception of need for inservice education. Or, such attainment could sensitize those individuals to even greater need for appropriate inservice education focused on rural children and youth.

In reviewing this background information concerning the respondents, the following conclusions seem to be most important: (1) although more than half the teacher respondents were women, only one in nine of the principal respondents were women; (2) teachers and principals in rural schools are less likely to be fluent in a language other than English than is the case with school board members; (3) rural school principals have acquired graduate degrees to a much greater extent than have teachers in rural schools; (4) more than 40% of the teacher respondents hold the master's or higher degree, yet 2.6% have not acquired the bachelor's degree; and (5) a third of the teacher and principal respondents are pursuing further college work.

Preparation for Teaching in a Rural Setting

Teachers and principals were asked to respond to questions concerning the usefulness of certain courses or types of courses in preparing them for teaching in the rural setting. Respondents were asked to indicate if each course or type of course was extremely useful, useful, of little use, or of no use in preparing them for teaching in a rural setting. They could also indicate that they had spent insufficient time in this area. In Table 5 courses which applied to both teachers and principals are listed in order of

perceived usefulness according to teachers. Percentage of teachers and principals responding who felt the course was useful or extremely useful are given. Principals were asked to rate four additional courses which are listed at the end of the table.

Table 5

Usefulness of Professional Education Coursework
in Preparation for Teaching in the Rural Setting

Course	Percent responding useful, extremely useful	
	Teachers	Principals
Student Teaching	84.9%	86.6%
Methods in specific content area	80.0%	87.4%
Methods in Elementary or Secondary Education	79.0%	78.8%
Pre-student teaching experience	75.2%	70.7%
Human Development	71.8%	85.5%
Educational Psychology or Learning in the Classroom	70.2%	83.2%
Audiovisual Education	69.9%	73.4%
Guidance and Counseling	69.3%	88.2%
Curriculum	68.3%	91.2%
Tests and Measurement	62.0%	74.3%
Foundations of Education	44.8%	58.6%
Philosophy of Education	43.3%	55.6%
School law	-	93.3%
Role of the principal	-	90.9%
Supervision	-	89.8%
School finance	-	86.4%

Although both teachers and principals were asked to rate courses according to their usefulness in preparing them for teaching in the rural setting, it appears that principals rated courses on usefulness in administering the rural school. School law, curriculum, role of the principal, supervision, guidance and counseling, and methods in content area were all ranked as more useful by principals than student teaching which was the most useful course to teachers. Teachers rated those courses that deal directly with classroom experiences and activities as the most useful. Both

groups of respondents rated courses which have direct application to their day-to-day activities as most useful. Thus, principals who are responsible for inservice programs may be choosing those activities based on what seems to be most useful in administering the school without regarding the usefulness or lack thereof for the teachers who receive the programs.

It would be interesting to determine if the differences between teachers and principals in perceiving what is useful is strictly based on what is used daily or if there is a philosophical or psychological difference in those who are teachers and those who choose to become principals. It might also prove beneficial to determine whether principals' perceptions are influenced due to their administrative role or due to their higher level of academic achievement attained, or if perceptions are influenced by a combination of these factors.

Teachers and principals were asked to indicate in what ways they received preparation for teaching in a rural setting. They were also asked to indicate what they felt was the most appropriate approach for preparing teachers for teaching in rural schools. Table 6 indicates the percent who responded to each item. Percentage is based on total number of questionnaires returned since respondents could check more than one item.

Few teachers or principals reported having received any formal training for teaching in a rural setting although 46.4% of teachers and 50.3% of principals indicate that there should be some specific preparation. Although no one approach to specific preparation was favored by a majority of either principal or teacher respondents, both groups tended to prefer one of three approaches: (a) specific content related to rural schools within regular courses; (b) program designed for teaching in a rural setting; or (c) inservice workshops. Principals indicated a greater preference for a program

designed for teaching in a rural setting while teachers indicated greater preference for including specific content related to rural schools within regular courses.

Table 6
Preparation for Teaching in a Rural Setting

Method of Preparation	Percent of Respondents Indicating Ways in Which They Had Been Prepared		Percent of Respondents Indicating Most Appropriate Approach for Preparing Teachers	
	Teachers	Principals	Teachers	Principals
Specific courses designed for rural schools	1.7%	0	5.0%	5.0%
Specific content related to rural schools within regular courses	7.0%	4.2%	15.0%	12.6%
Program designed for teaching in a rural setting	2.0%	1.7%	10.9%	18.5%
Inservice workshops	3.2%	2.5%	13.9%	13.4%
Attending conferences	2.3%	3.4%	1.6%	0.8%
No specific preparation	66.5%	73.1%	23.5%	21.0%

More than one of every five teachers and principals indicate that no specific preparation is necessary. Nearly 30% of principals and slightly more than 30% of teachers did not respond to the question concerning appropriate preparation. This may be an indication of a lack of any real commitment to a need for any special preparation. A possible explanation for the lack of commitment to special preparation for teaching in rural school settings may be a concern that such preparation would "lock out" opportunities for moving into larger schools. Future research focused on this aspect would be helpful to determine the degree to which this might be a factor.

Teacher Assignments in the Rural Setting

Teacher assignments is an area in which little data is available which indicate the number of separate preparations or separate disciplines assigned each teacher. Various authors indicate teachers in rural schools carry more varied assignments than do teachers in urban schools, but the degree to which they do isn't available. Table 7 presents type of classroom organization in which the elementary teacher respondents are teaching and the number of preparations required of and number of separate disciplines taught by secondary teacher respondents.

Table 7

Teaching Assignments Reported by Elementary and Secondary Teachers in Rural Schools

Assignment	Percentage Reporting
Elementary Teachers:	
Self-contained Classrooms	51.6%
Departmentalized Classrooms	27.5%
Teaching Two Grade Levels	17.9%
Teaching Three or More Grade Levels	18.8%
Secondary Teachers:	
Number of Teaching Preparations	
One	15.4%
Two	19.3%
Three	22.1%
Four	19.5%
Five	14.9%
Six	6.8%
Seven	2.1%
Number of Separate Disciplines Taught	
One	66.1%
Two	24.8%
Three	6.1%
Four	2.0%
Five	1.0%

The majority (51.6%) of the elementary teachers who responded to this question reported teaching in self-contained classrooms while 27.5% teach in departmentalized classrooms. About 37% of these elementary teachers teach two or more grade levels.

The secondary teacher respondents reported that they carried varied teaching assignments. As indicated in Table 7, 43% of these secondary teacher respondents have four or more separate preparations. More than a third teach two or more individual disciplines. Add these assignments to such responsibilities as sponsorship of clubs, coaching, newspaper and yearbook, chaperoning, ticket selling and other fundraising activities and it is readily apparent that teaching assignments and other responsibilities assumed by teachers in rural schools are quite diverse. These factors might provide some basis for inservice planning and pre-service preparation programs.

Satisfaction with Teaching in a Rural Educational Setting

Satisfaction or dissatisfaction with aspects of teaching in the rural school or with components of the school program could very well have impact on attitudes toward both the quality of pre-service and inservice programs and the very need for such programs. Table 8 presents information regarding the percentage of those responding to each question who expressed satisfaction with selected aspects of teaching in their school.

Satisfaction with these aspects of teaching appears to be quite high overall. That teachers reported to be somewhat less satisfied than principals with textbooks may be related to their daily use of the books or to their possibly greater knowledge of the content of the subject covered in the texts. Principals do not use the books regularly and cannot be content specialists in all areas. Principals on the other hand are less satisfied than teachers with

teachers' availability to students outside the classroom. This may be less a reflection on the willingness of the teacher to be available and more a result of the many duties assigned to teachers which consume the time they might otherwise spend with students.

Table 8

Satisfaction with Aspects of Teaching in the Rural School

Aspects of Teaching	Percent Satisfied	
	Teachers	Principals
Textbooks used	84.3%	94.4%
Classroom activities you (your teachers) are directing	96.6%	98.3%
Evaluation of student progress and achievement	88.1%	91.3%
Teacher availability to students outside the classroom	81.4%	70.9%
Opportunities to innovate within the classroom	91.8%	88.9%
Administrative support toward innovative practices	90.7%	97.4%
Financial support for innovative practices	67.5%	76.4%
Availability of inservice programs	70.1%	60.7%
Opportunities for teachers to attend inservice programs	75.7%	71.2%
Scope and sequence/articulation of curriculum	82.0%	70.2%

Both teachers and principals reported being highly satisfied with administrative support toward innovative practices, but at the same time report greater dissatisfaction with the financial support of these practices. Financial support is generally lower for rural schools than for city schools with a larger financial base. It appears, however, that in spite of apparent financial restrictions, rural school teachers make the effort to be innovative and principals support these practices. Principals, who must arrange for inservice programs, are not as satisfied with the availability of inservice

programs as are teachers. The question arises then whether principals and teachers are more dissatisfied with the number of programs available or the quality and diversity of the content of those programs that are available.

Principals, teachers, and school board members were asked to indicate if they were satisfied or dissatisfied with various components of the school program. Table 9 indicates the percentage of "satisfied" responses of the total number responding to the question.

Table 9

Satisfaction with Various Components of the School Program

Components of the School Program	Percentage of "Satisfied" Responses		
	Teachers	Principals	School Board Members
Community support of curricular offerings	75.6%	87.7%	82.9%
Community support of school athletics	82.9%	88.4%	89.3%
Guidance/Counseling services	73.8%	84.2%	63.1%
School Library/Media Center	81.0%	86.7%	86.7%
Transportation services	91.1%	95.6%	92.0%
Preparation of teachers	91.7%	91.3%	83.8%
Teacher assignments	86.7%	96.5%	82.1%
School facilities	77.8%	78.9%	77.0%
Inservice programs	68.9%	71.3%	84.7%
Evaluation of student performance	85.8%	91.1%	74.3%
Diagnosis of student abilities	81.6%	84.8%	67.3%
Use of comprehensive student reporting systems to parents	81.6%	80.5%	73.1%
School program evaluation	82.6%	87.6%	71.2%
Involvement of students in program evaluation	71.1%	77.5%	58.2%
Competence of teachers in working with rural children and youth	91.6%	94.7%	86.5%
Teacher certification in terms of schools in rural settings	92.2%	90.3%	89.9%
The general school curriculum	89.7%	92.9%	81.3%
Teacher understanding of rural children and youth	90.7%	92.9%	86.0%

The responses received from teachers, principals, and school board members indicate that these groups are quite satisfied with several components of the school program including transportation services, school facilities, and teacher certification.

School board members tended to be somewhat less satisfied than were teachers and principals with several components which have a direct effect on students: guidance/counseling services, evaluation of student performance, and diagnosis of student abilities. School board members are also not as satisfied with school program evaluation and the involvement of students in program evaluation as are teachers and principals. However, all three groups were less satisfied with the involvement of students in program evaluation than with most other components. Only inservice programs drew a lower satisfaction rating from teachers and principals. Respondents were generally satisfied with the competence of teachers in working with rural children and youth and with teacher understanding of rural children and youth. They were also satisfied with teacher certification in terms of schools in rural settings. There appears to be little indication from these perceptions that there is extensive perceived need for inservice education concerning rural children or teaching in the rural school.

Inservice Programs

Teachers and principals who responded to the questionnaires expressed less satisfaction in general with the inservice programs and in particular with their availability than they did with other items listed in Tables 8 and 9. Teachers and principals were asked several questions about inservice programs they had participated in within the last five years. In response to the question concerning attendance at inservice programs, 91.5% of the

teachers and 82.4% of the principals reported having attended at least one inservice program within the last five years. Most reported participating as an observer or participant, with two teachers reporting roles as presenter and two as discussant or moderator. Only one principal had the role of presenter with none reporting participation as discussant or consultant. Six teachers reported acting as a consultant on an inservice program. The five most frequently reported topics of inservice programs for teachers were Classroom management/Discipline, Subject Area, Special Education (Mainstreaming, IEP's, Gifted, etc.), Curriculum, and Career and Vocational Education. The most frequently reported topics of inservice programs for principals were Classroom management/Discipline, Curriculum, Special Education, Educational Technology (Audio-Visual, Computers, etc.), School organization and Administration (Finance, Scheduling, Purchasing, etc.), and Legal, Professional aspects of Administration.

Differences Between Respondents in NCA Accredited and Non-Accredited Schools

Responses were separated into those from teachers, principals, and school board members associated with schools accredited by North Central Association and those from schools which are not accredited by North Central Association. Chi square test was used to determine if there was a significant difference in responses. Responses were considered significantly different if the probability was less than 0.05.

Teachers differed significantly on 10 items presented in preceding tables. One such item was the usefulness of "Human Development" courses in preparation for teaching in the rural setting (see Table 5). A greater

percentage of teachers in accredited schools responded that this course was extremely useful than did teachers in non-accredited schools.

In response to questions concerning satisfaction with aspects of teaching in the rural school, teachers differed in their responses to two items (see Table 8). Teachers in non-accredited schools reported greater satisfaction with their availability to students outside the regular classroom than did teachers in accredited schools. Perhaps teachers in non-accredited schools have fewer demands on their time so that they are more available to students. Teachers in accredited schools may have more administrative duties or other obligations which are required to maintain the standards of accreditation and thus report less satisfaction with the time they have for students. It is also possible that teachers in non-accredited schools are less aware of the necessity of spending time with students outside school than are teachers in accredited schools.

Teachers in non-accredited schools were also more satisfied with administrative support toward innovative practices than were their colleagues in accredited schools. It may be that teachers in non-accredited schools are less demanding of support for innovative practices and thus more satisfied with what they receive. On the other hand, teachers in accredited schools may be stifled in their attempts to try innovative ideas in the classroom because these practices would not meet accreditation guidelines. It is interesting that principals in these schools showed no significant differences in their responses to either of these two questions.

Teachers in accredited and non-accredited schools responded differently to seven items in the question concerning satisfaction with various components of the school program (see Table 9). Teachers in accredited schools were more

satisfied with their school library/media center than were teachers in non-accredited schools. This may be because accreditation guidelines set up specific minimum requirements for libraries/media centers which are not met by non-accredited schools. It may also be that schools which are accredited have a greater financial base with which to meet these requirements.

Teachers in non-accredited schools reported greater satisfaction with guidance/counseling services, preparation of teachers, diagnosis of student abilities, use of comprehensive student reporting systems to parents, involvement of students in program evaluation, and competence of teachers in working with rural children and youth. Perhaps teachers in non-accredited schools are less aware of what should be available or have fewer expectations in these areas and thus are more easily satisfied with the status quo. However, it may be that, without the guidelines and/or restrictions imposed by accreditation, non-accredited schools are able to set up various components of the school program in a way that is more responsive to the needs of the school and its personnel. Are the guidelines set up by North Central Association truly responsive to the needs of the individual school and its unique situation, particularly the rural school?

Principals from accredited and non-accredited schools differed significantly in their responses to only one item in the preceding sections. Those from non-accredited schools responded more frequently that pre-teaching experiences were extremely useful than did principals from NCA accredited schools (see Table 5).

There were no significant differences in responses of school board members in accredited and non-accredited schools to any of the previous items.

Effect of Membership in/Accreditation by North Central Association

Teachers, principals, and school board members were asked to respond to 36 items by indicating if they felt the item had been or would be greatly enhanced through NCA membership, had been or would be enhanced to some degree by NCA membership, had not been or would not be affected by NCA membership, or had been or would be restricted by membership in NCA. The form that was used to elicit responses is presented in Appendix A. Only those items on which respondents from NCA accredited schools differed from respondents in non-accredited schools are discussed in this section.

Teachers from accredited and non-accredited schools differed significantly on all 36 items with a greater percentage of teachers from accredited schools responding that membership in/accreditation by North Central Association would greatly enhance or would enhance to some degree each item.

Table 10

Items on Which Principals from Accredited and Non-Accredited Schools Differed

Identification of educational needs of students
Deriving the school's statement of philosophy
Teachers are well qualified in professional education areas
Teachers are well qualified in subject matter areas
Teachers are actively involved in areas of decision-making affecting school programs
Conditions in school are favorable to good morale
Adequate guidance/counseling services are provided
Adequate special education instruction and services are available
The school attempts to develop effective practices which capitalize on the school's strengths and correct the school's weaknesses
The program supports instruction through appropriate facilities and professionally and technically prepared staff
The school building affords desirable learning conditions
The school site assures health and safety of students
The school has planned and carries out continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of its program in accomplishing the objectives upon which the staff and board have agreed.

Principals from accredited and non-accredited schools responded differently to the 13 items listed in Table 10 with principals from accredited schools responding more frequently that membership had or would greatly enhance or would enhance to some degree each of the items.

School board members associated with accredited and non-accredited schools differed on only three items which are listed in Table 11 with school board members from accredited schools reporting that accreditation enhanced these items more frequently than did members from non-accredited schools.

Table 11

Items on Which School Board Members from
Accredited and Non-Accredited Schools Differed

Deriving the school's statement of philosophy
Clarification of educational program priorities
Adequate special education instruction and services are available

It is interesting that teachers in accredited schools responded more positively to all items than did teachers in non-accredited schools. Because of self-studies, contact with accreditation teams, and review of the final report of an accreditation visit, teachers in accredited schools may be much more aware of what accreditation can do for a school. On the other hand it seems odd that teachers in accredited schools would respond that accreditation would greatly or somewhat enhance the provision of adequate guidance/ counseling services (Item 25) and then indicate less satisfaction with those services than do teachers in non-accredited schools. Teachers from non-accredited schools also reported significantly greater satisfaction with preparation of teachers even though teachers from accredited schools were more positive in their feelings that membership in/accreditation by North Central Association would greatly or somewhat enhance the qualifications of teachers

(Items 13 and 14). Perhaps teachers in accredited schools are more aware of the possibilities and therefore less satisfied with the results.

Principals were more nearly in agreement on the effect of membership in/accreditation by North Central Association, differing significantly in their responses to only 13 items. Principals are usually more intimately involved with accreditation procedures and visits than are teachers and it might be assumed that they would have a better understanding of what accreditation or membership in an accrediting agency can do for a school. Possibly principals in accredited schools are no more inclined than principals in non-accredited schools to believe that accreditation enhances aspects of the school program. Or maybe principals in non-accredited schools are aware of the standards set by accreditation and agree with principals in accredited schools on the majority of these items about the effect of membership in/accreditation by NCA.

A greater percentage of all three groups of respondents from NCA accredited schools responded that deriving the school's statement of philosophy would be greatly or somewhat enhanced than did respondents from non-accredited schools. This may be because the accredited schools developed a school philosophy in order to meet accreditation requirements, while non-accredited schools either have no written philosophy and do not see the value of one or have already written a philosophy without the pressure of accreditation.

Respondents from accredited schools also responded across the board that accreditation would enhance the availability of adequate special education instruction and services to a greater degree than did respondents from non-

accredited schools. This may be because accredited schools had to set up or improve their special education offerings in order to be accredited.

CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the information about the effect of membership in/accreditation by North Central Association, the following points should be noted. (1) In all cases where responses were significantly different, respondents from NCA accredited schools were more positive about the ability of membership in/accreditation by the North Central Association to enhance the quality of the various aspects of the schools program than were respondents from non-accredited schools. (2) Principals, who would be expected to be most aware of standards/guidelines for accreditation, differed on fewer items than did teachers. (3) Teachers in accredited and non-accredited schools differed significantly on all items concerning effectiveness of accreditation. (4) Although teachers from NCA accredited schools reported that they felt that membership in/accreditation by the North Central Association would enhance the quality of various aspects of the school program, they were not always as satisfied with related components of their school program as were teachers from non-accredited schools.

The results of this nine-state study prompt the following conclusions:

1. Accreditation standards related to professional growth and licensure appear to be no real problem to personnel in rural schools since a large percentage pursue graduate work leading to higher degrees.
2. Teachers, principals, and school boards of both accredited and non-accredited schools view accreditation as a process for enhancing quality of programs.

3. Teachers and principals in this study did not support special programs for preparing new teachers for teaching in rural schools. Less than half of the teacher respondents and just over half of the principals believed some focus on rural school teaching should be interwoven in regular pre-service courses or programs.
4. Teaching assignments for both elementary and secondary teachers in rural schools are quite varied. Elementary teachers responded that 37% teach two or more grade levels, more than 51% teach self-contained classrooms, and 28% teach departmentalized classrooms. In addition, these teachers reported that they often assumed additional responsibilities such as coaching, chaperoning, sponsoring clubs, and fundraising.
5. Secondary teachers carry varied teaching assignments as well as varied duties beyond the classroom. More than 40% have four or more separate preparations, while more than one-third teach two or more individual disciplines. Nine percent reported having six or seven preparations while nine percent teach three, four, or five individual disciplines. Such diverse teaching assignments must have impact on whether or not accreditation standards are met.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations should be considered by the North Central Association's Commission on Schools as it considers ways to provide leadership in enhancing the quality of education in rural schools:

1. The recent Outcomes Accreditation process may be the most appropriate process for rural schools to utilize in achieving and maintaining membership in the North Central Association.
2. Minimum standards for teacher subject-matter preparation in rural schools may need to be reviewed in terms of accommodating the common diverse assignments given secondary teachers, at least. The question to be considered is "Can teachers in rural schools provide quality programs even though they may not have the same depth in each subject taught as is possible in larger schools?"
3. In view of the high satisfaction of teachers and principals with various aspects of rural school programs, the Commission on Schools may wish to provide more information to rural school personnel regarding exemplary programs in rural schools. The researchers became concerned during this study that rural educators may not be knowledgeable regarding "model" programs in rural schools. Is high satisfaction with these programs due to lack of knowledge concerning the real potential for quality education, causing principals and teachers to be satisfied with what currently exists in their own schools?

4. In view of the perceptions by personnel in both accredited and non-accredited schools that NCA membership enhances the quality of school programs, the Commission should increase efforts to encourage rural schools to pursue NCA accreditation.

REFERENCES

- Amodeo, L. Special issues related to rural education and teacher certification. Paper presented to the first Annual Conference for Rural Education, Las Cruces, NM 1981.
- Becklund, J., & Gaashold, M. (Eds.). Reaching beyond the city: Special education in non-urban settings. Seattle: Programs Development Assistance System, 1980.
- Charles, E. The preparation of teachers for small rural schools. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Arizona, 1969.
- Moriarty, T. Problems of rural superintendents in western South Dakota. The Rural Educator, 1981, 3 (1), 1-5.
- Muse, I., & Stonehocker, L. A study of small rural high schools of less than 200 students: Perceptions of teachers and administrators. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association Conference, San Francisco, 1979.
- Noble, A. C. Some new perspectives on rural education. The Rural Educator, 1981, 3 (1), 10-14.
- O'Neal, L., & Becker, W. Rural education: Past and present (Part II). The Rural Educator, 1981-82, 3 (2), 17-27.
- Salmon, P. Small school districts' concerns for the 80's. Needs of Elementary and Secondary Education in the 1980's: A Compendium of Policy Papers, January 1980. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 185 660)
- Sturges, A. The small school: A rediscovered resource in American education. North Central Association Quarterly, 1974, 291-293.

Appendix A

20. Check the degree to which you believe membership in/accreditation by the North Central Association
HAS ENHANCED or WOULD ENHANCE the quality of various aspects of your school program.

	Has been/would be GREATLY ENHANCED through NCA membership	Has been/would be ENHANCED TO SOME DEGREE by NCA membership	NCA membership has not/would have no effect on quality	NCA membership restricts/would restrict quality
INSTITUTIONAL PURPOSE:				
(01) Identification of educational needs of students				
(02) Deriving the school's statement of philosophy				
(03) Clarification of major goals of educational program				
(04) Establishing objectives consistent with major goals				
(05) Clarification of educational program priorities				
ORGANIZATION, ADMINISTRATION, AND CONTROL:				
(06) Obtaining effective board/superintendent relationships				
(07) Adequate administrative and supervisory personnel for effective operation of program				
(08) Principal has necessary autonomy and authority to provide leadership needed to accomplish improvement of instruction with the staff				
(09) School organized to assure achievement of its stated purposes				
INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM:				
(10) The instructional program is designed to impart knowledge and skills				
(11) The instructional program is designed to assist students in learning the process of inquiry				
(12) The instructional program is designed to develop attitudes, interests, and values essential to the successful functioning of an individual in a democratic society				
PROFESSIONAL STAFF:				
(13) Teachers are well qualified in professional education areas				
(14) Teachers are well qualified in subject matter areas				
(15) School system encourages teachers to improve their competencies				
(16) Teachers are actively involved in areas of decision-making affecting school programs				
(17) Conditions in school are favorable to good morale				
EXTRA-CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:				
(18) The school has a diversified and balanced program of extra-classroom activities designed to make a positive contribution to the educational development of students				
(19) An appropriate intellectual climate is fostered				
(20) An appropriate cultural climate is fostered				
(21) An appropriate social climate is fostered				
(22) Growth in student leadership and social interaction skills are fostered				
(23) Special student interests are encouraged				
PUPIL PERSONNEL SERVICES:				
(24) Adequate school health services are provided				
(25) Adequate guidance/counseling services are provided				
(26) Adequate special education instruction and services are available				
INSTITUTIONAL ADAPTABILITY:				
(27) The school is organized to foster experimentation and innovation				
(28) New approaches in curriculum organization and technology are employed				
(29) The school attempts to develop effective practices which capitalize on the school's strengths and correct the school's weaknesses				
INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA PROGRAM (including library):				
(30) A coordinated instructional media program is accessible to teachers and students				
(31) Equipment and personnel are available for the production of a wide range of media for students and faculty				
(32) The program supports instruction through appropriate facilities and professionally and technically prepared staff				
FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND CONTROL:				
(33) The school community provides sufficient financial support to maintain high standards in providing staff, facilities, and materials needed to accomplish the school's purposes				
SCHOOL FACILITIES, INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS, AND EQUIPMENT:				
(34) The school building affords desirable learning conditions				
(35) The school site assures health and safety of students				
EVALUATION:				
(36) The school has planned and carries out continuous evaluation of the effectiveness of its program in accomplishing the objectives upon which the staff and board have agreed				

COMMENTS:
